

/29 cont./

765 the table at every breakfast and supper.

On the fortieth day, or on one of the Saturdays, the mourning banquet for the deceased is held. A ram is killed and meat dishes are prepared. The relatives of the deceased, who up to this time have been fasting, do not break their fast until this day. The mother and the foster mother, however, fast for a whole year.

The second mourning-banquet involves even greater expenditures. This banquet is called aphskhuvra /see foreign text/ (1).

1. aphs = soul; khu = lot, order;
vra = to do, to carry out; i. e., the
giving of the banquet in honor of the
soul of the deceased.

On this occasion animals are killed, much is spent, and an effort is made to satisfy the soul of the deceased as well as possible.

[775] The Abkhaz are convinced that an unsatisfied soul can harm not only their property, but also themselves. This banquet is held in the second year after the death of the departed, more often in the autumn when there is an abundance of everything.

For the day of the aphskhuvra guests are invited to bewail the deceased. Sometimes manila (horse-races) are also organized [541] on this same day in honor of the deceased. If the races have been [202] planned beforehand, everybody is informed in good time by messengers. Meanwhile the hosts are preparing ample supplies of provisions, animals, wine, cheese, bread, etc. On the eve of the aphskhuvra, the belongings of the deceased are on display, and the horse of the departed is tethered near them, covered with a mourning blanket. The deceased's weapons are hung on the saddle of his horse, his rifle, pistol, dagger, saber, whip, etc.; subsequently there is lamentation at the grave with the remains.

And then this scene takes place: a crowd of people of both [302] sexes stand around, barefoot and in mourning. The men's hair [260] is braided, as is the women's. People on foot and on horseback approach them, each of them leading one or two bulls, or a few

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774 upon the summit of the mountain Tabakona. They are divided
775 into groups according to their degree of power: the younger ones
754 usually travel upon mice, frogs, cats, etc., the older ones on
foxes, wolves, etc. On Assumption Eve they are all obliged to
gather upon the Tabakona for the annual report of their deeds
to their sovereign, Roskipi, and to produce material proof of
their industrious service -- a heart taken from a man or animal,
a liver, eyes, nails, hair, etc. To avoid attack from witches,
the Abkhaz take the following measures: during the fast of the
789 Assumption they erect crosses and stick candles in their hair, and
785 on the eve of the Assumption they shoot off rifles, sing, and
796 spend the whole night in vigil. The Abkhaz believes that a
witch can simultaneously be at home, among people, and on
top of the mountain Tabakona. The Abkhaz explain such a
splitting-up of a person by saying that it is not the witch herself
that wanders about, but her accessory soul (aphschchda = super-
fluous soul).

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The True God -- Paganism -- The Principal and
Secondary Gods of the Abkhaz -- Causes of
Polytheism -- "Creators" and "Forgers" -- Fate
or Predestination.

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To assist the supreme being, endowed with all the qualities
with which, according to our understanding, God is endowed, says
Mr. A., Abkhaz mythology added a number of other deities,
assigning to each his particular designation. These assisting
deities, according to their understanding, were created by the
Almighty before man and the universe came into being, and
people at prayer appeal through them to God himself. God
776 himself never descends to earth, but if he needs to punish some-
782 one or to grant someone his grace, he sends out one of his assistants.
In the prayers which are said and sung at sacrifices and other